AWARENESS • ENGAGEMENT • ACCOUNTABILITY

ETHICAL SERVICE

HANDBOOK FOR EXECUTIVE BRANCH EMPLOYEES

WELCOME
to federal service!

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In choosing to work for the United States Government, you are joining millions of other professionals who have committed themselves to serving the American public.

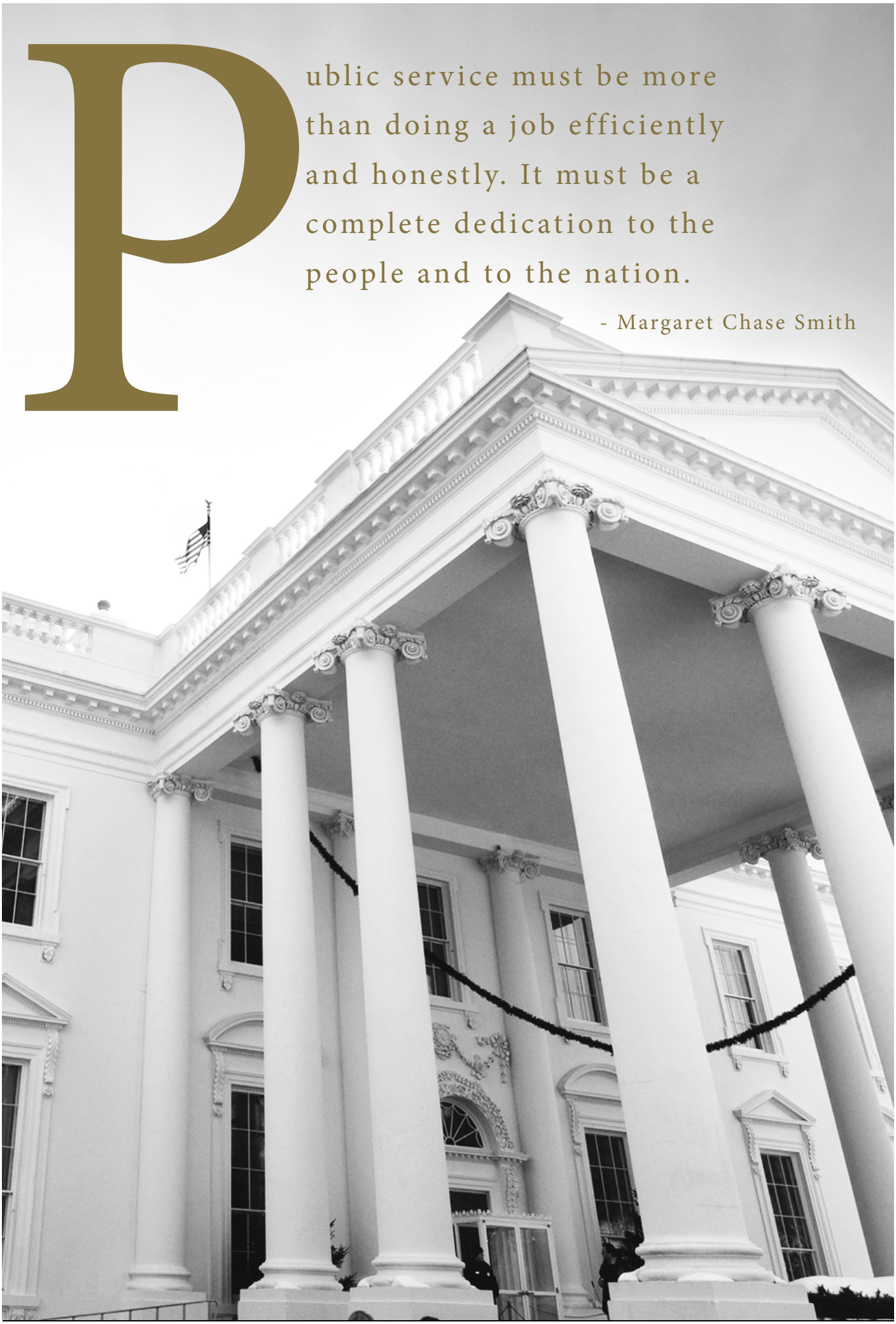
"We, as public servants, safeguard the integrity of our nation's Government."

Working for the federal Government is more than just a job—it is a singular responsibility. We affirm this responsibility in the solemn oath we take to "well and faithfully discharge the duties of our offices." We fulfill this responsibility in the day-to-day performance of those duties. And in fulfilling this responsibility, we safeguard the integrity of our nation's Government.

This handbook is your introduction to the ethical and legal requirements of your Government service. Please review it thoughtfully, as the concepts explained here underlie the culture of our workplace and require your personal commitment.

Public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation.

- Margaret Chase Smith



OUR PRINCIPLES & STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

We are committed to upholding the highest principles and standards of ethical conduct in all that we do. We apply these principles and standards in the course of our daily work, and by faithfully observing them, we safeguard the honor of public service and the reputation of the executive branch. Through them, we hold ourselves and each other accountable for the integrity of our service to our country and to our fellow citizens.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OUR COMMITMENT P.06

YOUR COMMITMENT P.07

AWARENESS P.10

- General Principles of Ethical Conduct
- Standards of Ethical Conduct
- Criminal Conflict of Interest Laws

ENGAGEMENT P.20

ACCOUNTABILITY P.24

OUR COMMITMENT

The {Department/Agency} is committed to upholding the highest ethical standards for all of its employees. To do that, we have support systems in place to help you determine what is ethically appropriate or legally required of you.

AGENCY ETHICS PROGRAM

Always remember that you are not alone. [The Department/Agency] has support systems in place to assist you.

Each agency is required by law to have an ethics program that includes:

- a counseling program for agency employees on all ethics and standards of conduct matters,
- an ethics education program, and
- an effective financial disclosure system for officials in positions at greater risk for conflicts of interest.

[Placeholder for agency program description and link to ethics office information here.]

YOUR COMMITMENT

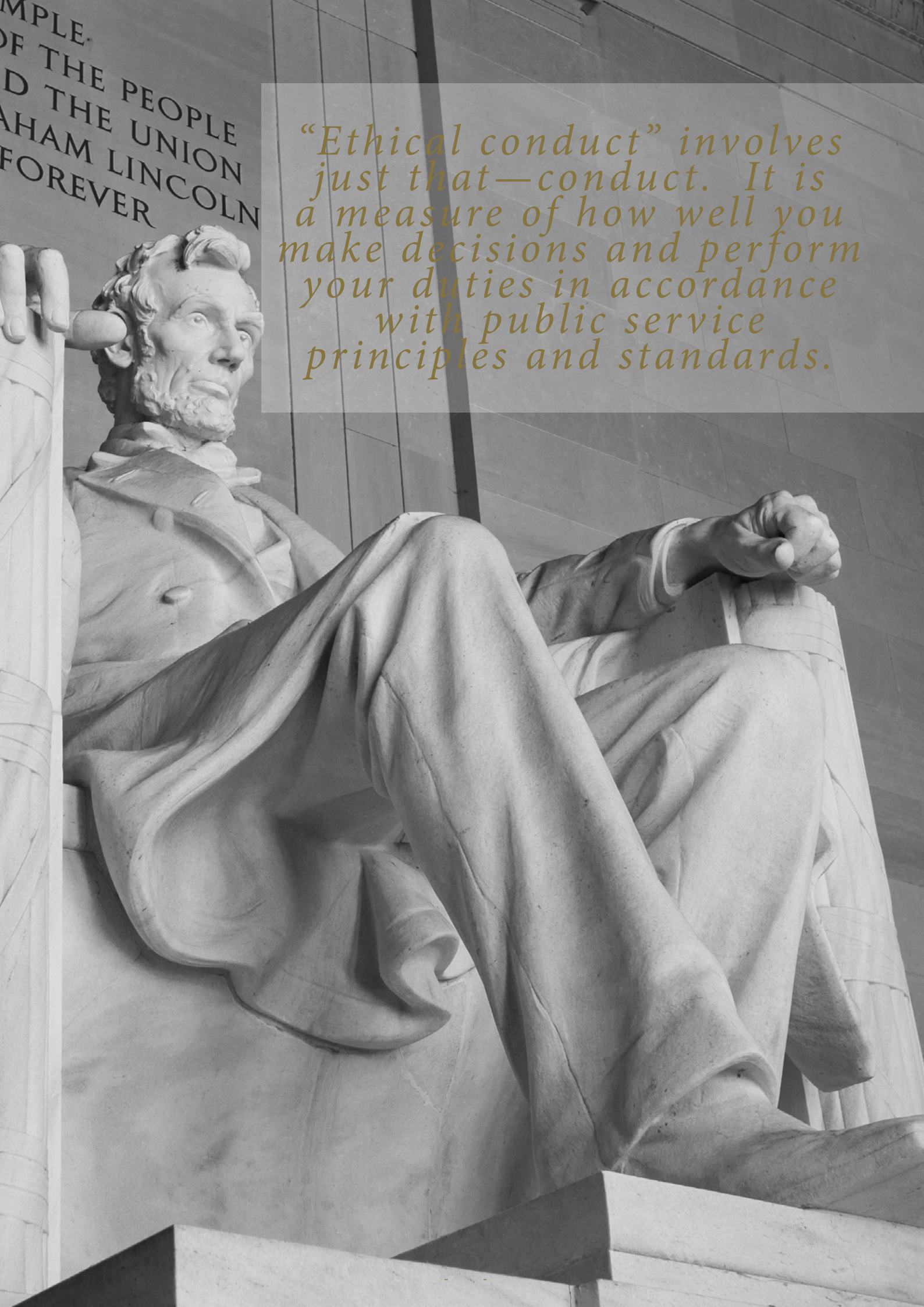
As a public servant, your commitment to ethical service is vital to performing your work and supporting the agency's mission with honesty, integrity, impartiality, and in the spirit of service to others.

Fulfilling the expectation of ethical service requires

Awareness: becoming familiar with the principles, rules, and laws that define what is and isn't appropriate conduct.

Engagement: cultivating habits of asking questions and seeking advice.

Accountability: acting in ways that reflect the expectations of public service and holding ourselves and each other accountable.



"Ethical conduct" involves just that—conduct. It is a measure of how well you make decisions and perform your duties in accordance with public service principles and standards.

insure domestic Tranquility, provide for
and our Posterity, do ordain and establish
Article 1

1

AWARENESS

1

We are guided in our conduct by a set of principles, and a specific and enforceable set of standards and laws.

AWARENESS

Ethically informed conduct requires you to have at least a basic understanding of the applicable principles, standards, and laws.

When carrying out our daily duties, we regularly face situations that involve ethical questions. From decisions as basic as how we use our time, to those as complex as how to allocate millions of dollars, the public's perception of the integrity of the work we do, both individually and collectively, is at stake.

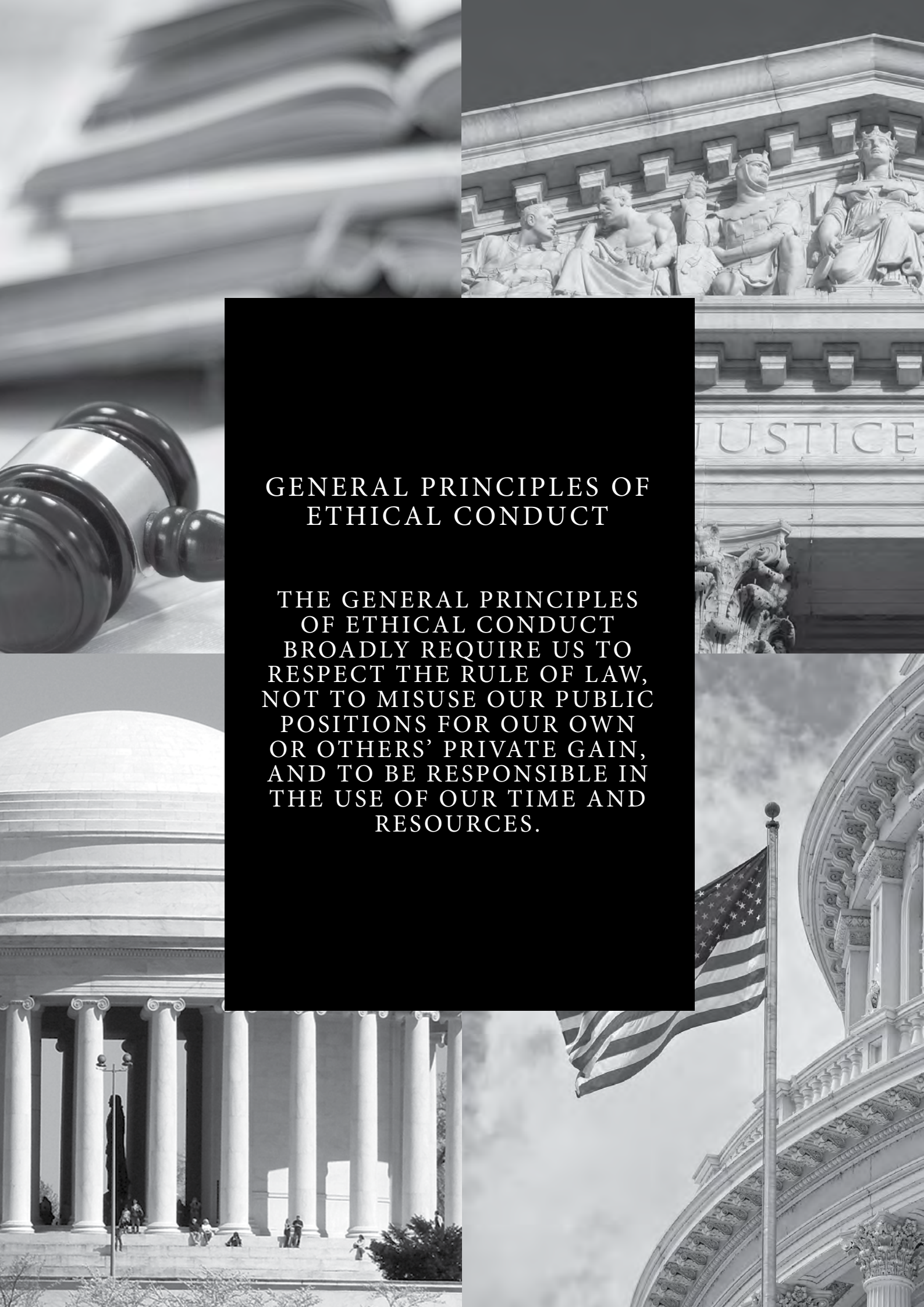
Sometimes gut instincts and good intentions may help us know the right thing to do. But good instincts and intentions are not enough when the integrity of our work could be questioned.

Consequently, we have a set of principles and a specific and enforceable set of standards and laws to help guide our conduct.

General Principles of Ethical Conduct

Standards of Ethical Conduct

Criminal Conflict of Interest Laws



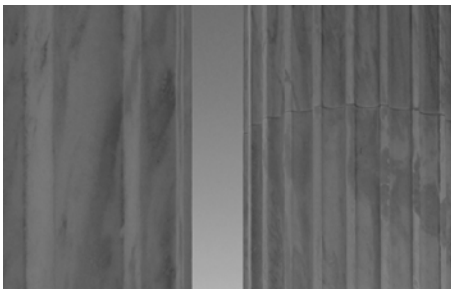
GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL CONDUCT BROADLY REQUIRE US TO RESPECT THE RULE OF LAW, NOT TO MISUSE OUR PUBLIC POSITIONS FOR OUR OWN OR OTHERS' PRIVATE GAIN, AND TO BE RESPONSIBLE IN THE USE OF OUR TIME AND RESOURCES.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

There are fourteen General Principles of Ethical Conduct. These General Principles essentially require loyalty to law, selfless service, and responsible stewardship.

LOYALTY TO LAW



We each have taken a solemn oath—to support and defend the Constitution. In all things, we uphold the Constitution and the oath we take. We fulfill this oath by respecting the rule of law—by adhering to all legal authorities in the work we perform and as citizens.

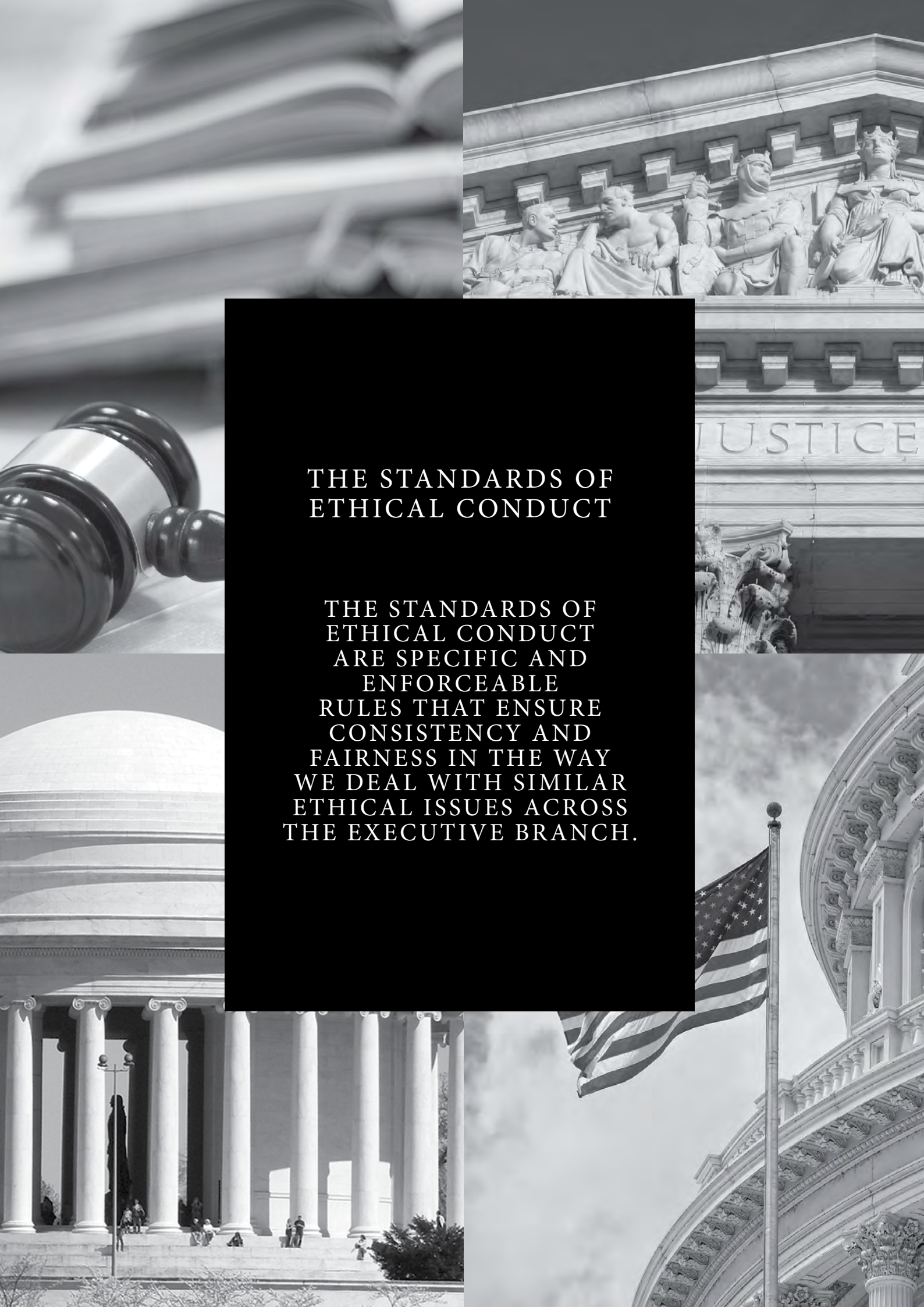
We also ensure that others follow the law—by disclosing waste, fraud, abuse or corruption when we see it, and by supporting disclosures by others. We hold each other and ourselves accountable, knowing that transparency and honesty are the surest ways to avoid conflicts and promote public confidence in Government.

SELFLESS SERVICE

Public service is a profession—for some, a calling—that involves a duty to something larger than ourselves. We must always act, and appear to act, with our nation's interests before our own. We not only put forth an honest effort in our work, but we do not seek personal advantage for ourselves or others. We hold ourselves to the highest standards, knowing that even the question of impropriety is sometimes enough to undermine good work.

RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

Monies, property, information and other governmental resources are entrusted to us. They do not belong to us personally. We honor our commitment to the American public by using these resources wisely and only to accomplish the work of the United States Government.



THE STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

THE STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT ARE SPECIFIC AND ENFORCEABLE RULES THAT ENSURE CONSISTENCY AND FAIRNESS IN THE WAY WE DEAL WITH SIMILAR ETHICAL ISSUES ACROSS THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH.

STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

The Standards of Ethical Conduct, which are introduced below, contain specific requirements and address situations where executive branch employees are likely to encounter ethical dilemmas.

Use of Government Position. As an employee, you cannot use your position with the Government for your own personal gain or for the benefit of others.

Conflicting Financial Interests. You are prohibited from working on Government matters in which you, your spouse or minor child, or certain others have a financial interest.

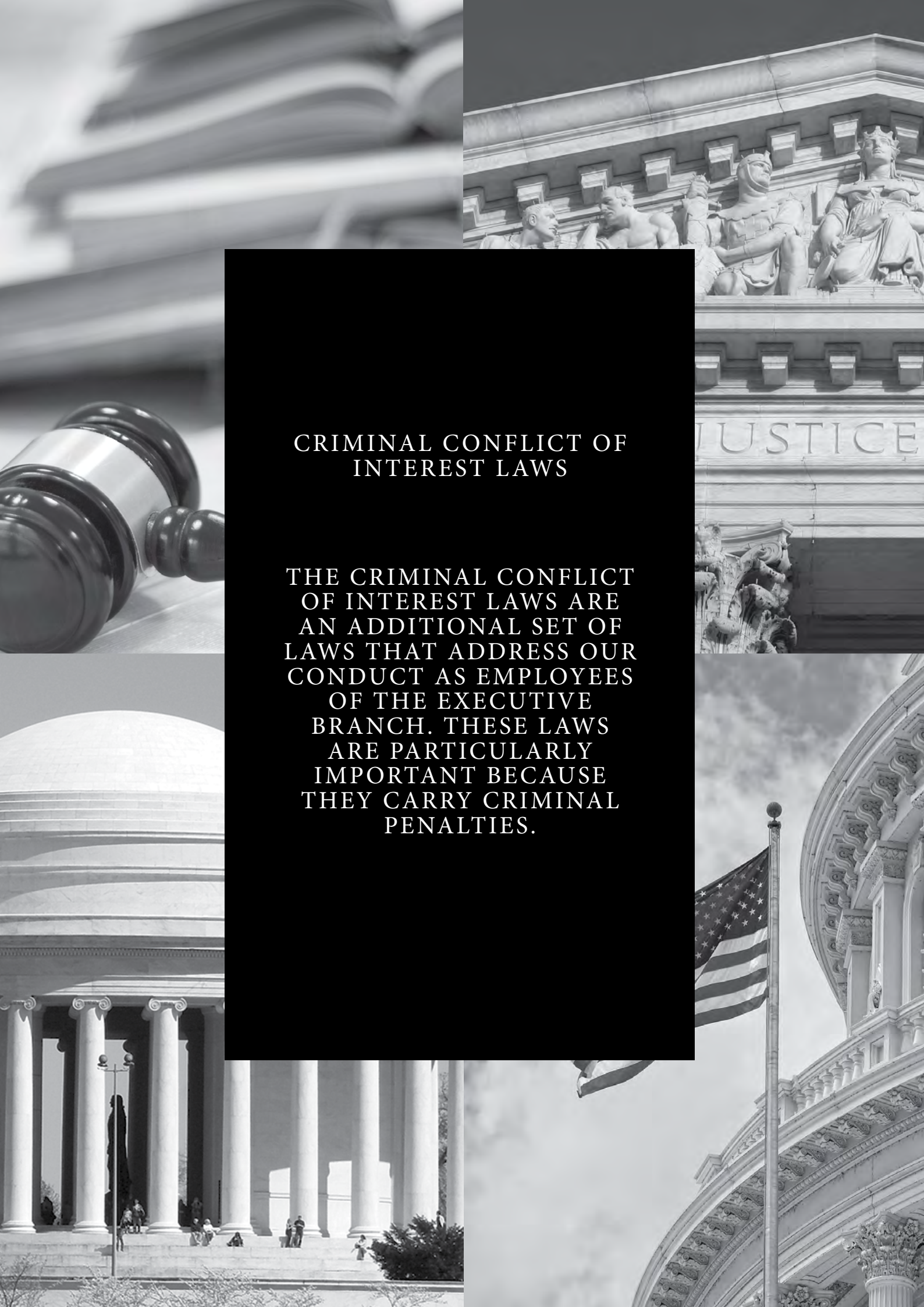
Impartiality. In general, you should not act on a Government matter if a reasonable person who knew the circumstances of the situation could legitimately question your impartiality.

Seeking Other Employment. If you are seeking other employment – either a future position or part-time work performed in your off-duty hours – you may not work on particular matters that would affect the prospective employer's financial interest.

Outside Activities. You may not engage in outside employment or other activity if it conflicts with your official duties or violates a law or regulation.

Gifts from Outside Sources. Generally, you may not accept gifts that are given because of your official position or that come from certain "prohibited" sources.

Gifts Between Employees. Generally, you cannot give a gift to your official superior. Also, you generally cannot accept a gift from another employee who earns less pay.



CRIMINAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST LAWS

THE CRIMINAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST LAWS ARE AN ADDITIONAL SET OF LAWS THAT ADDRESS OUR CONDUCT AS EMPLOYEES OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. THESE LAWS ARE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT BECAUSE THEY CARRY CRIMINAL PENALTIES.

CRIMINAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST LAWS

Each of the criminal conflict of interest laws, which are introduced below, prohibits specific types of conduct.

Conflicting Financial Interests (18 U.S.C. 208). You are prohibited from working on Government matters in which you, your spouse or minor child, or certain others have a financial interest. (Note: This prohibition is also discussed in the Standards of Ethical Conduct.)

Supplementation of Salary (18 U.S.C. 209). You may not be paid by someone other than the United States for doing your Government duties.

Bribery (18 U.S.C. 201). You are prohibited from accepting gratuities or bribes to influence your Government actions.

Representing Others in Claims and Other Matters Affecting the Government (18 U.S.C. 205). You are generally prohibited from certain involvement in claims against the United States, or from representing another before the Government in matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

Receiving Compensation in Matters Affecting the Government (18 U.S.C. 203). You are prohibited from receiving compensation for representational activities involving certain matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

Restrictions on Former Employees (18 U.S.C. 207). After you leave Government service (or leave certain high-level positions), you may be subject to limitations on your post employment activities.

LAW
CASES

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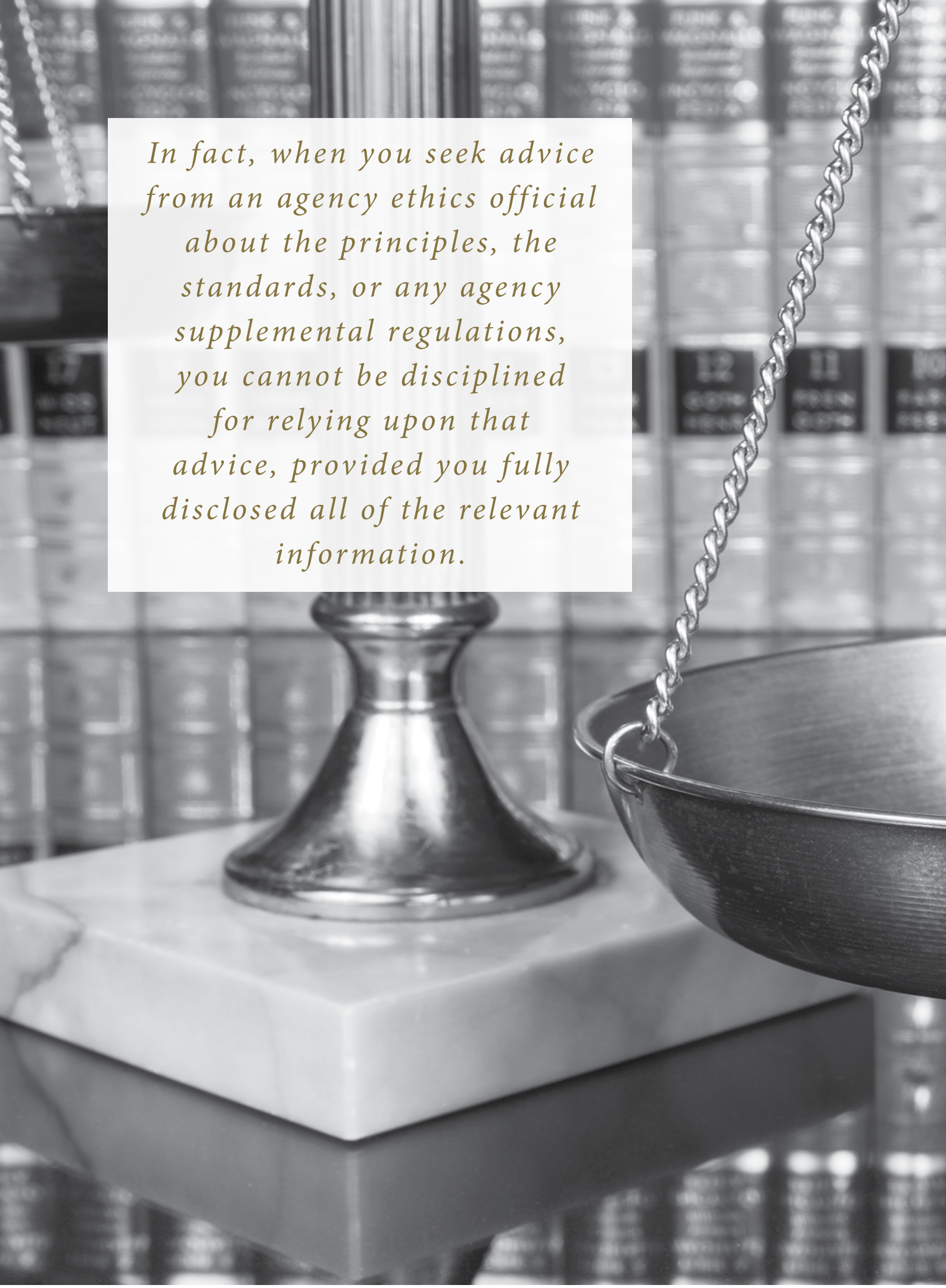
ENGAGEMENT

Building awareness of the ethics principles, rules and laws so you can spot actual or potential ethical issues is an ongoing process.



In fact, when you seek advice from an agency ethics official about the principles, the standards, or any agency supplemental regulations, you cannot be disciplined for relying upon that advice, provided you fully disclosed all of the relevant information.

ENGAGEMENT

Building awareness of the ethics principles, rules and laws so you can spot actual or potential ethical issues is an ongoing process. It requires that you cultivate habits of asking questions and seeking advice.

If you find yourself in a situation and don't know whether there is a problem or are unsure what to do, talk it out with someone. Consult your supervisor or an agency ethics official. Ethics officials are there to answer your questions and assist you.

[Insert DAEO information here.]

Given that an ethics violation harms the reputation of the Government, disrupts the agency's work, and has personal repercussions for you, it is in everyone's interest that you ask questions and seek advice before acting.

You should never feel alone in making decisions about what is ethically appropriate or legally required of you.

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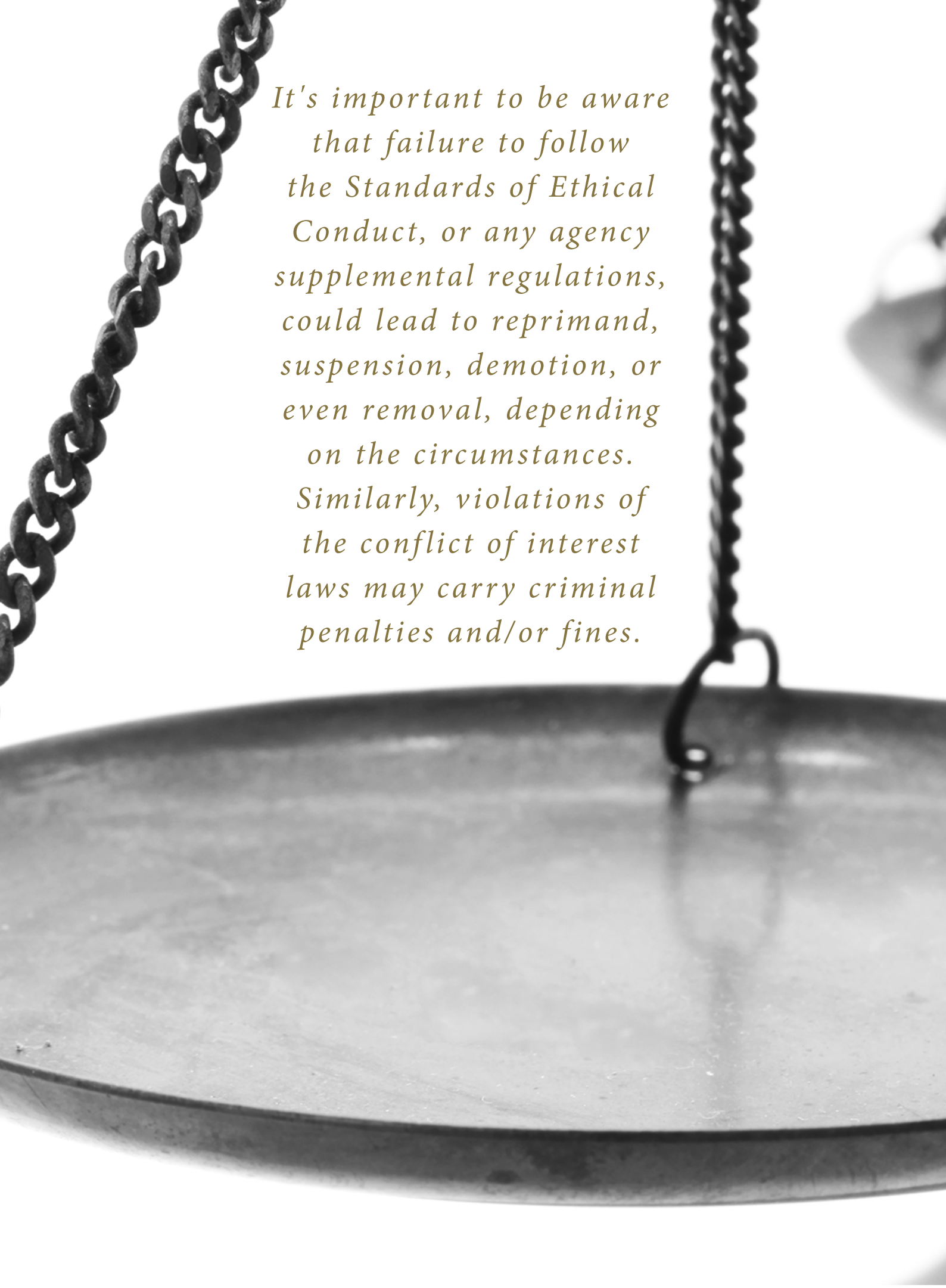
ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is the cornerstone of honest service.



It's important to be aware that failure to follow the Standards of Ethical Conduct, or any agency supplemental regulations, could lead to reprimand, suspension, demotion, or even removal, depending on the circumstances. Similarly, violations of the conflict of interest laws may carry criminal penalties and/or fines.

ACCOUNTABILITY

An ethical workplace is one where ethical conduct is encouraged and supported. It is also one where concerns can be raised without fear of retaliation. If you observe waste, fraud, abuse or other misconduct, there are avenues for reporting it.

The agency ethics office is always a resource for discussing what you have observed.

Likewise, you can report your concerns to the agency Office of Inspector General or to the Office of Special Counsel.

When we each act with integrity, and expect the same of others, we not only perform with excellence but we engender trust.